

Teachers' Code-Switching in the ESP Classroom in China

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Abstract

The lack of research on teachers' code-switching in the ESP classroom in China testifies the necessity of the present study. Based upon the theories of sociolinguistics and language education, this study aims to examine features, functions and educational reflections of teachers' code-switching in ESP classroom in China. The methods of field work, class observation, and interview are used. The study on teacher code-switching in the ESP classroom of three universities indicates that code-switching is extensively employed by ESP teachers, and that the direction of the language switch and the proportion of teacher talk in English suggest that the base language for ESP teaching is still English, and code-switching is a necessary tool for teachers due to a number of pedagogical considerations and sociolinguistic factors in ESP lessons involving students who lack proficiency.

Key words: ESP classroom; Code-switching; Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Classroom should be a center of sociolinguistics research (Halliday, 1978). Code, a term borrowed from communication theory and semiotics, has been

widely used in the fields of linguistics and literature. In sociolinguistics, this term "code" derives from Bernstein's controversial work (1971 & 1973). Influenced by Bernstein, Halliday (1978) emphasizes codes in his theory of social semiotics. According to the Mey (1998) and Swann (2004), code refers to the language and variety of language which are transmitted by different groups in social situations. In this study, code refers to language (or dialect) used in ESP classroom.

Code-switching has been defined and studied from different approaches, and such as the sociolinguistic approach (Auer, 1984; Gumperz, 1982; Milroy & Muysken, 1995), the grammatical approach (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Poplack, 1980; Myers-Scotton, 1993), the psycholinguistic approach (Clyne, 1991; Giles, 1982; Li, 1996), and the pragmatic approach (Yu, 2004). However, it is found that there is a broad agreement according to the definitions of code-switching, which is the alternate use of elements from two different languages or dialects within the same conversation or even the same utterance. In this study, the definition of code-switching from the functional perspective is followed. That is, code-switching in ESP classroom refers to any alternate use of two codes or languages whether they are within one utterance or between one utterance and in an interactional discourse.

According to the places where switches occur with sentences, Poplack (1989) has successfully classified three types of code-switching which are inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching and tag code-switching. Later, he made another distinction between "smooth switching" and "flagged switching". Smooth switching refers to skilled or fluent code-switching, that is, there is "a smooth transition between L1 and L2 elements, unmarked by false starts, hesitation or lengthy pauses" (Poplack, 1989, p.404), and flagged switching means that switching may be marked by false starts, hesitation or lengthy pauses.

From sociolinguistic perspective, Auer (1994 & 1998) differentiates between participant-related code-switching and discourse-related code-switching. While Muysken (2000) uses code-mixing to replace code-switching and according to the processes at work, he makes another distinction of the types of code-mixing which are insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization.

In the present study, three types of code-switching: intra-unit code-switching, inter-unit code-switching, and tag-unit code-switching are adopted because an utterance (clause) is the basic unit of code-switching analysis.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

1.1 Sociolinguistic Approach to Code-Switching

There are many studies (Appeal & Muysken 1987; Gardner-Chloros 1995 & 2005; Milroy 1987; Myers-Scotton 1983 & 2001) on code-switching from the sociolinguistic approach to find out how to identify and depict the role of each language in the community and the motivation of the speakers to switch codes.

The widely used dichotomy of situational versus metaphorical code-switching is introduced by Jan-Peter and John J. Gumperz (1972). Situational code-switching refers to some changes of language choice corresponding to changes of the situation, particularly participant, setting and activity type. While metaphorical code-switching means the other changes in language choice to achieve special communicative effects with participant and setting remaining the same. In 1982, Gumperz made a distinction between situational and conversational code-switching. Situational code-switching remains the same as that of the 1972's work while conversational code-switching is defined as the alternating use of multiple languages within a single conversation, with the same settings or participants. Metaphorical code-switching mentioned above is a subset of conversational code-switching. In ESP classroom, metaphorical code-switching is related to the role as a teacher and non-teacher guise (Simon, 2001). Situational code-switching is associated with different kinds of lesson contents or tasks in which the use of specific code can be predicted.

Gumperz (1982) lists six functions of conversational code-switching. They are quotations, address specification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification and personalization versus objectivization.

Myers-Scotton introducing the Markedness Model (MM) (1988 & 1993 & 2001 & 2002) with aims to present the social motivation of code-switching and a revised markedness model (1999 & 2001 & 2002) is another important figure who studies code-switching from the sociolinguistic perspective. The Markedness Model states that speakers make full use of the correlation

between codes or certain styles and the groups, based on this knowledge, design their communicative strategies deliberately by using these varieties. In the Markedness Model, several premises exist. First, this model is a social-pragmatic one and it studies utterance interpretation by focusing on their social meanings. Second, linguistic choices can be recognized by speakers and hearers. Third, speakers always have multiple identities. A linguistic choice reflects the presentation of one identity rather than another, and possibly reflects an identity that has not been established, but its realization is being negotiated by the linguistic choice. Finally, speakers are goal-directed. It means that their behavior is purposive with their goal to optimize their rewards.

Therefore, several theoretical assumptions can be made for this research according to the above Model. First, Teachers' code-switching (language alternation) in ESP classroom is systematic and a highly purposeful activity rather than random. Both social and individual attitudes may be the most influential factors. Second, in ESP classroom context, code-switching is a communicative competence or resource that teachers and students can take advantage of to maximize their teaching and learning rewards. Lastly, teachers' code choices in ESP classroom are bound by the social norms and pedagogical rules.

1.2 Code-Switching in EFL/ESL /ESP Classroom

Many researches (Piasecka, 1988; Duff & Polio, 1990 & 1994; Canagarajah, 1996; Adendorff, 1996; Hancock, 1997; Cheng, 2003; Chen, 2004; Macaro, 2005; Gao & Dai, 2007; Liu, 2007; Yao, 2007) have studied the functions of classroom code-switching. Most of the studies on code-switching in the classroom are focused on "roles of code-switching in the restructuring of participants' linguistic and communicative repertoires" (Unamuno, 2008, p.2). Possibly it has been agreed that the appropriate use of code-switching plays a positive play in language teaching and learning although more systematic description of roles played by code-switching in language learning interactions. However, these studies are mainly carried out in ESL or EFL classroom, especially in the primary English classroom, junior English classroom, college classroom for non-English majors or classroom for teaching the general course for English majors. According to the research "A Preliminary Study of Teacher Code-switching in Secondary English and Science in Malaysia" by Then and Ting (2009), it is found that code-switching in the ESL classroom is vastly different from that in the classroom in which English is taught as a content subject. In China, ESP classroom teaching is content-based. Thus it is quite necessary to explore the functions of code-switching in ESP classroom. In China, only two studies on code-switching in Business English Classroom by Liu Huan (2009) and Liu Yanhua (2011). However, their studies are only carried out in one university and one is

from the pragmatic perspective. Until now none of the research has focused on teachers' code-switching in ESP college classrooms from the sociolinguistic perspective. Cai states that "it is time for college language teaching to shift gradually to ESP" (2004, p.22). Hancock (1995) also indicates that the findings on the code-switching may not completely applicable to the entire language classroom. Therefore, to look into the patterns and account for the functions of code-switching in ESP classroom becomes necessity.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The present study aims to explore the features and functions of code-switching in ESP classroom to improve ESP teaching in China. Meanwhile it is hoped to raise ESP teachers' awareness of using code-switching in classroom and facilitate their language choices in the interactive classroom activities. The study is of significance. First, it may contribute to the study of code-switching in classroom teaching, and complement and perfect the theory of code-switching. Second, it may motivate ESP teachers to reflect their ways of using language and guide them to monitor their language choices in their practical teaching. Third, it may challenge to the teaching concept in China that pure target language input can achieve the perfect effect with no native language used. Lastly, the present study may offer ESP teachers and administrators suggestions to contribute to the ESP teachers' development to maximize the roles that code-switching plays in ESP classroom.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Research Questions

- What are the patterns of teachers' code-switching in ESP (Business English) classroom?
- What kinds of function do teachers use code-switching to fulfill pedagogically and communicatively?

2.2 Research Sites and Subjects Description

Three ordinary undergraduate universities in Shandong Province were chosen. In these universities, ESP courses were taught and the ESP teachers were allowed to switch codes. ESP teaching was considered the specialty of English teaching and Business English had developed into a major based on the English majors. In each university, there were 15 teachers who were engaged in ESP teaching, with most of them double-professionally-titled, and two or three were professors or associate professors. The teachers in the universities had motivation to adopt various methods to improve their classroom teaching. The number of students at school who were majored in Business English was ranged from 500 to 600. Six or more simulation laboratories and practice bases had been established. More than three sessions of graduates were well received because of their actual operation ability.

The ESP teachers from the three universities who switch codes in Business English classroom were chosen as the subjects.

Business English classes were chosen in the 2010-2011 academic year. Six of the Business English teachers were asked to participant in this project and twelve of their lessons were observed and audio-taped. Among the chosen teachers, three of them were associate professors, and three lecturers, with three female and three male teachers. They taught different courses (*Business English, International Trade Practices, Introduction to International Trade, Business English-Viewing, Listening & Speaking, Business Correspondence, and International Commercial Law*) for senior students who were majored in Business English.

2.3 Data Collection

The data were collected from classroom observation, audio-recording, and interview. The purpose of the data gathering was to obtain the deep understanding of the nature of teachers' code-switching in ESP classroom.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis contains quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis with transcribing and coding the recordings included.

2.4.1 Transcribing and Coding the Recordings

The recordings were transcribed after the observation. Every utterance of the classes was transcribed as detailed as possible in spite of the focused teachers' utterances. To complement the transcriptions, body language of teachers and students, such as intonation, volume, laughs and interruptions were taken down by ethnographic notes.

In this study, teachers' talk was divided into units of utterance. With Myers-Scotton's MLF model as foundation, the units were labeled as four types: (E) with English as complete utterance; (C) with Chinese as complete utterance; E(C) the utterance with English as the target language, one word or phrase in Chinese embedded; C(E) the utterance in Chinese with one word or phrase in the target language (English).

According to Ferguson (2003), the functions in the coded lessons were divided into three broad types which were code-switching for the subject access, the classroom management and interpersonal relations, as is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Explication of Functions of Utterance Unit

Subject access	Lexis or grammar explanation/explication (LG)
Classroom management	Elicit responses from students (EL)
	Clarifying the lesson content taught (CL)
	Repetitive, such as, reiteration, translation (RE)
	Engaging students' attention; encouraging and discipline students; clarifying task instruction; directive (CM)

Subject access	Lexis or grammar explanation/explication (LG)
Interpersonal relations	Humor or laugh (HU)
	Praise and comment (PR)
	Humanize classroom atmosphere; reduce social distance; negotiate different identities; establish intimate relationships with students (IN)

2.4.2 Quantitative Analysis

The frequency of utterance units by teachers and students was calculated, and the distribution of each language type and the functions of each type were presented. Meanwhile, the types of code-switching (intra-unit, inter-unit and tag-unit switches) of the teachers' total language used was also figured.

2.4.3 Qualitative Analysis

The functions of code-switching in the data were described and analyzed in detail.

3. MAJOR PATTERNS OF CODE-SWITCHING

Major patterns of code-switching were analyzed from structural patterns and language choices in teacher talk.

3.1 Structural Patterns

The structural patterns of code-switching were presented at two different levels.

3.1.1 Switching at the Word or Phrase Level (Table 2)

Table 2
Switching at the Word or Phrase Level

Items	Word classes	Number of switches	Percentage(%)
1	Noun	550	10.64%
2	Adverb	424	8.20%
3	Verb	150	2.90%
4	Interjection	108	2.09%
5	Adjective	98	1.90%
6	Preposition	45	0.87%
7	Conjunction	26	0.50%
8	Pronoun	32	0.62%
9	Phrase or group	521	10.08%
10	Clause	3216	62.21%
	Total	5170	100.00

Table 3
Periods' Language Distribution

	Types of units	Number of units	Percentage(%)
1	English	270	55.8
2	English-Chinese	21	3.9
Total		59.7	
3	Chinese	144	27.9
4	Chinese-English	66	12.4
Total		40.3	

In the quantification of switches, nouns, business terms and word translations (Chinese to English or English to Chinese) were also included. The teachers tend to use the nouns, and phrase or group, to translate the new BE terms, and clause for interpreting the procedures.

In ESP classes, teachers call on specific students to respond to questions. The name-calling are often inserted in English to fulfill the directive function. For example (the translation of utterance in brackets with the names of students assumed).

(a) 李士鹏, come here. You answer the question.
 C(E) CM

(Li Shipeng, come here. You answer the question.

(b) OK, 王雪, would you please express the whole procedure in spoken English? Tell us not just draw it.

(OK, Wang Xue, would you please express the whole procedure in spoken English? Tell us not just draw it.)

E(C) EL

Other nouns used by teachers serve to explain or translate the target language terms or words. For example:

(c) First of all it's the clean collection. Clean collection in Chinese is 光票托收, 不是清洁是光票托收。

E(C) CL RE

(First of all it's the clean collection. Clean collection in Chinese is Guang piao tuo shou. It doesn't mean cleanliness but Guang piao tuo shou.)

(d) Yes, 寒流.
 (Yes, cold current) E(C) PR

As for verbs, most of the switched English verbs are inserted in Chinese utterances to explain lexeme or grammar. For example:

(e) Next one is 确认订单.
 (Next one is confirming an order.) E(C) RE

(f) Number A2, 挑选, yes?
 (Number A2, pick out, Yes?) E(C) EL

3.1.2 Switching at the Clause Level

With regards the switching at the clause level, two different situations included. One is switches between two utterance units demarcated by different languages; the other is switches between two utterance units belonging to different types of unit. These switches between two utterance units occur when what has just said is repeated in the other language. This is one of the features of teacher talk style to connect the preceding utterances with what follows by frequent repetition of linguistic elements. For example:

(g) There is only draft; there is no document.
 光票托收里只有汇票, 不需要提交相关单据。

C RE CL

(h) What is sight draft?

即期汇票是吧？在即期付款交单里你需要提交一张即期汇票。 C CL RE

In the above examples, code-switching serves the functions of message repetition in the form of translation (Parks 1982; Urgese 1984) by the way of teachers' repeating what has just been said in the other language to clarify their message.

3.2 Language choices in teacher talk

The frequency of the three types of code-switching (Intra-unit code-switching, inter-unit code-switching and tag-unit code-switching) was shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Frequency and Percentage of Types of Code-Switching

Types of code-switching	Frequency	Percentages(%)
Intra-unit	44	22
Inter-unit	128	71
Tag-unit	14	7

Inter-unit code-switching occurring between units or between turns is the most frequently used in each period for different purposes. Intra-unit code-switching within a clause occurs while teaching new business terms or doing or checking exercises. Intra-unit code-switching is used in ESP classroom quite often, especially when teaching business terms. Teachers switch code more in intra-unit and inter-utterances than tag-units. The tags are frequently used in the form of business terms, interjections, and filler tags.

4. MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF CODE-SWITCHING

The major functions of code-switching in the study are as follows (Table 5)

Table 5
The Major Functions of Code-Switching

Functions		Frequency	Percentage(%)
Subject access	LG	39	7.47
	EL	117	23.08
	CL	178	35.17
	RE	57	11.44
Classroom management	CM	98	20.42
Interpersonal relations	HU	1	0.18
	PR	5	1.5
	IN	4	0.75

4.1 Code-Switching for Subject Access

Code-switching for subject access aims to facilitate students' understanding of the subject matter of their lessons. Code-switching plays an essential play in the teachers' elicitation, interpretation of written texts, or elucidation of the meaning of the texts. In the present

corpus, three uses are related to the subject access: code-switching for EL; code-switching for CL and code-switching for RE.

4.1.1 Code-Switching for EL

In the observed classroom, teachers switch from Chinese to English or from English to Chinese to elicit responses from the students at the various points. e. g.:

(i) What is the present demand-supply relationship like? So in Chinese we often say 供过于求。Yes, 供大于求、供不应求。

Take (i) for example, the teacher asked students to say in Chinese in case that the students could not give the correct answer in English. In this situation, the students' ability to respond the questions in the target language might be underestimated.

4.1.2 Code-Switching for CL

The teachers switch codes to discuss culturally relevant anecdotes, to give explanations or to provide illustrations to make sure the students' understanding the lesson content. Teachers often repeat the lesson content in the other language to achieve the function.

(j) Clean collection is used to collect small amount of money. 光票托收的钱是少量的钱。

4.1.3 Code-Switching for RE

While teachers transmit the same message in both languages for emphasis or clarification, RE function, to some extent, overlaps with CL function in the clarification of the lesson content.

(k) The second type of collection is documentary collection, 跟单托收, 跟单托收。

4.2 Code-Switching for Classroom Management

Switches used for classroom management discourse in our data are to activate, discipline and sing praise of students and to signify a change of stand.

(l) Then, next one. 我们可以开始长期的合作关系。

(m) 大家想一下(Please think it over)。Ok, why should this kind of payment exist?

4.3 Code-Switching for Interpersonal Relation

The classroom as a place of institutional learning is a social and affective environment as well. In ESP classroom, relationships and identities of the teachers can be negotiated by using code-switching. It is important for teachers to maintain or better interpersonal relationships with students and it is also quite necessary for the teachers to manage their teaching effectively.

(n) Ok (with a smile), ladies and gentlemen.

(o) 光票托收里只有发票不需要提交相关单据 (But in clean collection, there is only draft and there is no document required). Good, en thank you.

4.4 Discussion

Based on the interview with the teachers, it is found that teachers made their code choices intentionally and purposively. There are two possible reasons for this. For one thing, the teachers may feel that the content is extremely important and therefore uses code-switching to make sure that the information is conveyed. For another, the ESP teachers use some amount of Chinese to make sure the students can understand the business terms or procedures better.

In ESP classroom, teachers' use code-switching, such as smile, humor, praise, comment to create a solitary atmosphere and to index their close relationships and identities to make students study more comfortably and effectively. In this sense, switching may be used as effective teaching strategy for ESP teaching.

However, sometimes unplanned code-switching occurs in the situation in which students' switch code to Chinese. Triggered by the students' code-switching, the teachers switch to Chinese accidentally. It is quite often that this kind of switch is not a long one. As soon as the teachers are aware of the situation, they would quickly switch to speak English, which shows that the teachers want to speak the target language as much as possible. Furthermore, if the teachers were to switch to Chinese too often or use too much Chinese, they might puzzle the students so that they would not know which language they are to use. Thus, the ESP teachers' should choose their languages consciously.

CONCLUSION

The present study has studied teachers' code-switching in ESP classroom from the sociolinguistic perspective. The findings of the study are as follows. First, all the teachers switch codes in their ESP classrooms without exception. Second, teachers' code-switching serves three categories of functions, namely, Code-switching for subject access, classroom management and interpersonal relation. Teachers tended to use phrase or group, clause, noun, and adverb more frequently than others. Teachers often used code-switching to translate BE terms, explain difficult points and manage classroom teaching. Third, teachers' code-switching is regarded as an carefully language choice to correspond the students' learning needs, teachers' roles in ESP classroom and teachers' psychological intentions.

The lack of research on teachers' code-switching in the ESP classroom in China testifies the necessity of the present study. In the future, more social variables should be included in order to allow more comparisons and

further in-depth analysis. More studies in a larger sample of teachers and students in a longitudinal dimension are also needed to get insight the role of code-switching as a teaching and discourse strategy.

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